

Flood Plains and Wetlands

Limit Flood Plain Development and Preserve Wetlands

Target(s):

Maintain “No Adverse Impact” flood plain policy within the New Growth Area.

No net loss of saline wetlands immediately and preservation of up to half of remaining acres by 2022.

Lincoln Now:

“Flood plains” refers to land that is susceptible to flooding or that has flood prone soils. Approximately 13.8% of Lancaster County is covered by floodplains. Floodplains provide multiple benefits to both the natural (flood storage, habitat, water quality) and built (recreation, public health and safety, economic) environments.

One of the major functions of the floodplain is to convey moving flood water during large storm events when the stream spills over its banks. When development in the floodplain disrupts this flowing water, it causes a rise in flood heights, similar to what happens when a dam is placed across a creek. Another function of the floodplain is to act as a natural sponge to absorb, slow down and filter storm water. Trees, shrubs and other natural vegetation along stream corridors buffer the creek by functioning as a protective barrier which soaks up stormwater, stabilizes stream banks, filters pollutants for clean water and protects aquatic life. The floodplain also stores flood water that floods outside of the stream banks and is temporarily slowed down in the floodplain outside of the creek.

Current local, state and federal statutes require that the city implement and enforce local floodplain regulations. The overriding policy for the floodplain is a “No Adverse Impact” policy for the City and County, which means that the community has a goal of insuring that the action of one property owner does not adversely impact the flooding risk for other properties.

Fresh water wetlands are those areas that have hydric (i.e., water-bearing) soils, are frequently if not regularly moist, and are home to water tolerant plants. Saline wetlands are those locations in the county where wetlands having a high salt content can be found. These wetlands played a large part in the founding of Lincoln and Lancaster County, as settlers were attracted by the salt deposits. “Eastern Saline Wetlands” were once estimated to be in excess of 20,000 acres. Now less than 4,000 acres remain and many of these are degraded. These wetlands form a regionally unique wetlands complex located in floodplain swales and depressions within the Salt

Creek, Little Salt Creek, and Rock Creek drainages in Lancaster and southern Saunders counties in Nebraska. Conserving the eastern saline wetlands also protects the endangered Salt Creek tiger beetle and saltwort plant as well as other flora and fauna which survive in the saline wetlands unique to this area. The Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership was initiated in 2003 to preserve the remaining acres of land associated with the unique eastern saline wetlands in northern Lancaster County.

The Plan's goal is "No net loss of saline wetlands and their associated functions with a long-term gain in sustaining wetland functions through the restoration of hydrology, prescribed wetland management, and watershed protection." Since its inception, the partnership has purchased nearly 710 acres of saline wetlands and other associated upland habitat, initiated educational activities, participated in saline wetland restoration projects, and provided for operation and maintenance of these areas.